DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 462 354 SO 033 605

AUTHOR	Traill, David
TITLE	Memorandum of a Conference with President Eisenhower after Sputnik. The Constitution Community: Postwar United States (1945 to Early 1970s).
INSTITUTION	National Archives and Records Administration, Washington, DC.
PUB DATE	2000-00-00
NOTE	9p.; Photographic images may not reproduce clearly.
AVAILABLE FROM	National Archives and Records Administration, 700 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W., Washington, DC 20408. Tel: 866-325-7208 (Toll Free); e-mail: inquire@nara.gov. For full text: http://www.nara.gov/education/cc/main.html.
PUB TYPE	Guides - Classroom - Teacher (052)
EDRS PRICE	MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	Foreign Countries; *Government Role; *International Relations; *Primary Sources; Secondary Education; Social Studies; Teacher Developed Materials; *United States History
IDENTIFIERS	Cold War; *Eisenhower (Dwight D); National Civics and Government Standards; National History Standards; Sputnik; USSR

ABSTRACT

After World War II ended in 1945, the United States and the Soviet Union (USSR) emerged as the two dominant countries in the post-war world. An arms race began, and this constant pursuit for respect and supremacy was called the Cold War. On October 4, 1957, the USSR launched the world's first intercontinental ballistic missile, with the first artificial earth satellite, Sputnik, aboard. Politicians and citizens reacted in shock, demanding increases in military and science education spending. This lesson relates to providing for the common defense as stated in the Preamble and to Article II, Section 2, Paragraph 1, of the U.S. Constitution, in which the president is charged to serve as commander-in-chief of the nation's military forces. The primary source document is a conference memorandum from the meeting of President Eisenhower and his advisors just after the launching of Sputnik. It correlates to the National History Standards and to the National Standards for Civics and Government. The lesson provides historical background about the Cold War and Sputnik (with two resources); and suggests diverse teaching activities for classroom implementation, including document analysis, a writing activity, oral history, creating a timeline, a research assignment and essay, and class discussion. Appended is the document. (BT)

Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made
from the original document.

ED 462 354

National Archives and Records Administration

THE CONSTITUTION COMMUNITY

Postwar United States (1945 to early 1970s)

Memorandum of a Conference with President Eisenhower after Sputnik

By David Traill

SO 033 605

National Archives and Records Administration
700 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20408
1-866-325-7208

http://www.nara.gov/education/classrm.html

2000

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)
☑ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.
☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.
• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

The Constitution Community is a partnership between classroom teachers and education specialists from the National Archives and Records Administration. We are developing lessons and activities that address constitutional issues, correlate to national academic standards, and encourage the analysis of primary source documents. The lessons that have been developed are arranged according to historical era.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Memorandum of a Conference with President Eisenhower after Sputnik

SECRET

October 9, 1957

MEMORANDUM OF CONFERENCE WITH THE PRESIDENT
October 8, 1957, 8:30 AM

Constitutional Connection

This lesson relates to providing for the common defense as stated in the Preamble and to Article II, Section 2, Paragraph 1, of the U.S. Constitution, in which the president is charged to serve as commander-in-chief of the nation's military forces.

This lesson correlates to the National History Standards.

Era 9 -Postwar United States (1945 to early 1970s)

- **Standard 2A** -Demonstrate understanding of the international origins and domestic consequences of the Cold War.

This lesson correlates to the National Standards for Civics and Government.

Standard III.B.1. -Evaluate, take, and defend positions on issues regarding the purposes, organization, and functions of the institutions of the national government.

Standard III.B.2. -Evaluate, take, and defend positions on issues regarding the major responsibilities of the national government for domestic and foreign policy.

Standard III.B.3. -Evaluate, take, and defend positions on foreign policy issues in light of American national interests, values, and principles.

Standard IV.C.2. -Evaluate, take, and defend positions about the effects of significant international political developments on the United States and other nations.

Cross-curricular Connections

Share this exercise with your history, government, and American literature colleagues.

List of Documents

1. Memorandum of Conference with President Eisenhower on October 8, 1957 (page 1 , page 2)

Historical Background

After World War II ended in 1945, the United States and the Soviet Union were the two dominant countries in the war-ravaged world. Each sought to maintain its supremacy by forging close economic, social, and military ties with neighbors and allies, and although some leaders had hoped to reduce arms levels, an arms race began after war ended. This constant pursuit for respect and supremacy was called the Cold War.

President Dwight D. Eisenhower campaigned in 1952 for the Republican nomination for president, hoping his wartime service as the supreme allied commander in Europe would prove his ability to lead and defend America. The outgoing president, Harry S. Truman, had been forced to recognize that the wartime alliance with the Soviets had collapsed, and conflicts between the two superpowers were growing worse. Events like the Berlin crisis, the Berlin airlift, the fall of Chiang Kai-shek in China, the Soviets' first atomic bomb tests, and the Korean War suggested more conflict lay ahead. Eisenhower was elected by a landslide, and he believed he could build upon the warm working relationship he had had with the Soviets during World War II. Joseph Stalin, the Soviet leader, died in 1953, and the Eisenhower administration had hopes of improving relations with his successor, Nikita Khrushchev, especially after the Soviet Union withdrew their military forces from neutral Austria in May 1955 and a summit meeting was held in Geneva, Switzerland, that July.

The Soviet Union's brutal crackdown on Hungarian attempts to democratize in 1956 appalled the West. Further demonstrative pronouncements from Khrushchev, such as his threatening warning "We will bury you," did little to reassure moderates. The United States began to monitor the Soviet Union more carefully and used intelligence assets, such as the U-2 spy plane, to reconnoiter the Soviet buildup of military forces. Western military officials were greatly afraid of a "bomber gap" that they thought was allowing the Soviet Union to produce more nuclear-capable bombers than NATO, and especially the United States, possessed. Neither the United States nor the USSR had yet launched a missile powerful enough to deliver a nuclear weapon to the other or to launch a satellite into Earth orbit. However, scientists were hard at work on both sides of the Iron Curtain trying to achieve the distinction of being the first to do so. U.S. military officials had two separate, competing programs trying to develop a missile with intercontinental capability.

The rivalry between the Army and Navy resulted in delays, and, unfortunately for the United States, a decision by the Department of Defense gave priority to the fledgling, untested Navy offering called Vanguard. Meanwhile, the Army's Redstone program conducted test flights but was not allowed to launch satellites or to advance development ahead of the Navy's program, which was tasked with deploying America's first satellite. In the Soviet Union, an announcement in May 1957 hinted to the Soviet people that a launch would come soon. The propaganda value and scientific respect gained from such a launch would be great. In 1954 Werner von Braun, the head of the Army's program, had written, "It would be a blow to U.S. prestige if we did not do it first."

On October 4, 1957, the USSR launched the world's first intercontinental ballistic missile, with the first artificial Earth satellite, Sputnik, aboard. At first, some in the Eisenhower administration downplayed the satellite as a "useless hunk of iron." As David Halberstam wrote in *The Fifties*, "The success of Sputnik seemed to herald a kind of technological Pearl Harbor, which was exactly what Edward Teller said it was." Others in America and around the world saw Sputnik as an ominous leap ahead in prestige and military ability, whether or not the new missiles could actually hit a target with nuclear weapons. President Eisenhower and some of his advisors, when they realized the significance of the Soviet achievement, met to discuss the alarming developments. A memo of that meeting preserved the initial reactions of those present.

The launch of Sputnik gave the Soviet Union an enormous boost in world respect and influence. Politicians and average Americans reacted in shock, and demanded increases in military and science education spending. The eventual launch of Explorer I in January 1958 finally allowed the United States to enter the space race. However, it took later successes in the 1960s for the United States to surpass the propaganda coup achieved with the launch of Sputnik.

Resources

Beschloss, Michael. *Mayday, The U-2 Affair* . New York: Harper and Row, 1986.

Halberstam, David. *The Fifties* . New York: Fawcett Columbine, 1993.

Teaching Activities

Document Analysis, Research, and Class Discussion

1. Distribute copies of both pages of the document to your students. Ask one student to read the document aloud while the others follow along. Lead the class in a discussion of the following questions: What type of document is it? What is the date of the document? Who wrote the document? Why was the document written? Why is the document's date important? What was the IGY? What is the tone of this memorandum? Why do you think it was classified? When was it declassified?

2. Direct students to read the document and list excerpts from it that show how calmly officials in this particular meeting reacted to the launching of Sputnik. Next, direct students to research contemporary magazines and newspaper articles that describe how others reacted to the launch of the satellite. Lead a class discussion comparing the lists they generated with the information their research uncovered.

3. Lead a class discussion on how this document reveals the president's responsibility as commander-in-chief of the armed forces, his response to the launch, and his knowledge of the abilities of the U.S. military's space programs.

Writing Activity

4. Assign students to assume the identity of one of the president's advisors (perhaps one of the individuals who attended the October 8, 1957, meeting) and write a one-page memorandum to the president expressing his or her reaction to the launch of Sputnik.

Oral History

5. Arrange for staff members or community members who have memories of the Sputnik launch and American responses to come to your class. Assign students to write three questions they might ask participants prior to the session. Show your guests the document and ask them if their memories of the event seem as calm as shown here. Videotape the session for future use.

Create a Timeline

6. Divide the class into five groups. Assign each group one of the decades between 1950 and 2000. Direct student groups to research the U.S. and Soviet space programs during their assigned decade. Ask students to identify the most significant events that occurred and list them on the board (or on posted butcher paper) in chronological order, creating a timeline visible to the entire class. As an extension of this activity, direct students to research other major events that occurred during the same period between the two countries and discuss with students to what extent space-related activities were influenced by diplomatic activities.

Research Assignment and Essay

7. Assign students to research and write an essay about what the United States government did in response to the launch of Sputnik. Possible topics include the formation of NASA, the race to the moon, and the National Defense and Education Act.

The document included in this project is from the Dwight D. Eisenhower Library. Its two pages are available online through the National Archives Information Locator (NAIL) [http://www.nara.gov/nara/nail.html] database, control numbers NLE-EPRES-DDEDIARY-STAFOCS57(2)-MEMOCWP10857 and NLE-EPRES-DDEDIARY-STAFOCS57(2)-MEMOCWP10857. NAIL is a searchable database that contains

information about a wide variety of NARA holdings across the country. You can use NAIL to search record descriptions by keywords or topics and retrieve digital copies of selected textual documents, photographs, maps, and sound recordings related to thousands of topics.

This article was written by David Traill, a teacher at South Fork High School in Stuart, FL.

SECRET

October 9, 1957

MEMORANDUM OF CONFERENCE WITH THE PRESIDENT
October 8, 1957, 8:30 AM

Others present: Secretary Quarles
Dr. Waterman
Mr. Hagen
Mr. Holaday
Governor Adams
General Persons
Mr. Hagerty
Governor Pyle
Mr. Harlow
General Cutler
General Goodpaster

Secretary Quarles began by reviewing a memorandum prepared in Defense for the President on the subject of the earth satellite (dated October 7, 1957). He left a copy with the President. He reported that the Soviet launching on October 4th had apparently been highly successful.

The President asked Secretary Quarles about the report that had come to his attention to the effect that Redstone could have been used and could have placed a satellite in orbit many months ago. Secretary Quarles said there was no doubt that the Redstone, had it been used, could have orbited a satellite a year or more ago. The Science Advisory Committee had felt, however, that it was better to have the earth satellite proceed separately from military development. One reason was to stress the peaceful character of the effort, and a second was to avoid the inclusion of materiel, to which foreign scientists might be given access, which is used in our own military rockets. He said that the Army feels it could erect a satellite four months from now if given the order -- this would still be one month prior to the estimated date for the Vanguard. The President said that when this information reaches the Congress, they are bound to ask why this action was not taken. He recalled,

DECLASSIFIED
E.O. 11652, Sec. 11
MR 76-49 Document #65
By J.W. Date 11-17-76

SECRET

Document 1: Memorandum of Conference with President Eisenhower on October 8, 1957, page 1.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

however, that timing was never given too much importance in our own program, which was tied to the IGY and confirmed that, in order for all scientists to be able to look at the instrument, it had to be kept away from military secrets. Secretary Quarles pointed out that the Army plan would require some modification of the instrumentation in the missile.

He went on to add that the Russians have in fact done us a good turn, unintentionally, in establishing the concept of freedom of international space -- this seems to be generally accepted as orbital space, in which the missile is making an inoffensive passage.

The President asked what kind of information could be conveyed by the signals reaching us from the Russian satellite. Secretary Quarles said the Soviets say that it is simply a pulse to permit location of the missile through radar direction finders. Following the meeting, Dr. Waterman indicated that there is some kind of modulation on the signals, which may mean that some coding is being done, although it might conceivably be accidental.

The President asked the group to look ahead five years, and asked about a reconnaissance vehicle. Secretary Quarles said the Air Force has a research program in this area and gave a general description of the project.

Governor Adams recalled that Dr. Pusey had said that we had never thought of this as a crash program, as the Russians apparently did. We were working simply to develop and transmit scientific knowledge. The President thought that to make a sudden shift in our approach now would be to belie the attitude we have had all along. Secretary Quarles said that such a shift would create service tensions in the Pentagon. Mr. Holaday said he planned to study with the Army the back up of the Navy program with the Redstone, adapting it to the instrumentation.

There was some discussion concerning the Soviet request as to whether we would like to put instruments of ours aboard one of their satellites. He said our instruments would be ready for this. Several present pointed out that our instruments contain parts which, if made available to the Russians, would give them substantial technological information.

A. J. Goodpaster
Brigadier General, USA

SECRET

Document 1: Memorandum of Conference with President Eisenhower on October 8, 1957, page 2.